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THE KINGDOM OF RUANDA

By J. J. MAQUET

121 THE world-view of a people refers to a kind of reality which is not directly observable. We can observe things and behaviour, but not ideas or mental attitudes. These have to be inferred. Furthermore, although the concepts and propositions which make up the world-view of the Banyarwanda[1] are all arrived at by induction, they do not possess the same logical status. They are located, so to speak, on different levels of abstraction. Some are arrived at by immediate inference from observation, as when we say, for instance, that for Banyarwanda 'the invisible world is a fearful reality'. This statement may be immediately inferred from the behaviour of the Ruanda people: their words, when they tell us their beliefs about the action of the spirits of the dead, and their behaviour if they are threatened by them. On the other hand, a statement such as 'strictly contractual relationships are inconceivable for a Munyarwanda' is much more abstract because it is reached by successive stages from an analysis of the political organization of Ruanda. The validity of the two kinds of statement is not necessarily affected by their degree of abstraction. Even a proposition which seems very far removed from its factual foundation may be checked by the observation of other relevant facts.

Ideas concerning the place of man in the world, his destiny, his main values, his attitudes in relation to his fellow men, the rules of his behaviour, and the meaning of the invisible world, may find expression in many kinds of social phenomena. However, as might be expected, some of these phenomena are particularly significant, as, for instance, folk-tales concerning the creation of the world and the arrival of the Batutsi in the country, proverbs, and forms of cult. To these special attention has been given.

The validity of an unstated cultural premiss will, of course, be established with more certainty if it is found implied in several and very different cultural phenomena. For instance, an analysis of the political structure may lead to the discovery of the principle of the fundamental inequality of the three castes of ancient Ruanda. The same principle is also implied in tales explaining the origin of the three groups and the sources of their social roles.

121 177 This study refers to the period when the Ruanda cult had not yet been subjected to the impact of Western culture. This is not very far back in time, for it seems that the first white man to be seen in Ruanda was Count von Götzen, who travelled through the country with a German scientific-military expedition in 1894. The first permanent occupation of the country was not more than fifty years ago, and important changes in the culture have

[1] The inhabitants of Ruanda.

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been brought only during the past thirty years. The present Ruanda culture has lost the coherence that existed in pre-European days. Those who have become more closely associated with alien activity, and have therefore felt its influence more constantly, now share a culture made up in part of their ancestral way of life and in part of their interpretation of the Belgian variety of Western culture as it operates in a colonial situation. Even those who have not been brought into direct contact with whites feel that their old patterns of life are losing their validity. But that more or less hidden part of the old culture, consisting of basic assumptions on the relationships of man with the world and with other men, has suffered the least change. To be sure, the legends of the descent of the first Batutsi meet with more scepticism than in the past, but the fundamental beliefs that this story reflects are still profoundly embedded in the Ruanda ethos. Even when new institutions, based on assumptions conflicting with the earlier ones, are imposed under external pressure and adopted, the principles shaping the older institutions will subsist and, if participation in the new institutions is unchecked, these will be completely reinterpreted in accordance with the former premises. Some manifestations of the continuing existence of the ancient assumptions in the contemporary context will be considered here, but we shall be mainly concerned with the Ruanda world-view as it was at the beginning of this century.[1]

Ruanda is a highland country in East Africa lying in the region delimited by lakes Kivu, Victoria, and Tanganyika. Its area is 24,500 square kilometres; its population amounts to almost 2 million inhabitants, the highest density in Africa south of the Sahara. Three socio-'racial' castes are to be

[1] Much of the material used in this study was collected by the author during two years' work (1950–1) in Ruanda as a social anthropologist of the *Institut pour la Recherche Scientifique en Afrique Centrale* (I.R.S.A.C.). The author was very much helped in his field research by Dr. E. Fineulst and Dr. G. De Clercq during their six-month course of training under his direction. Extensive and valuable information has been found in the published literature on Ruanda, especially studies by Father A. Arnoux, Abbé L. de Lacger, Abbé Alexis Kagame, the late Father A. Pagès, Mr. G. Sandrart, Father Schumacher, and Mr. J. Vanhove. The author is also grateful to the Abbé Kagame for having placed at his disposal some of his manuscripts. In formulating the conceptual and theoretical scheme used in this paper, the author has relied considerably on the teaching and works of Professor Clyde Kluckhohn of Harvard University. He is immensely indebted for his fundamental training in anthropology to the teaching staff of London University and particularly to Professor Daryll Forde. Mr. Lawrence Oschinsky has kindly corrected the manuscript. A short bibliography is given at the end, but it has not been felt necessary to document this study at every point, nor indeed was this possible, since it was written in the field with the use of a very restricted library.

This is an essay in the etymological meaning of the word. If the underlying configurations of a culture constitute its most important part, since they provide a key to the interrelatedness of apparently unconnected phenomena and to the meaning of apparently incomprehensible behaviour, they are also the most elusive realities. They evade direct observation and, often, direct interrogation. The anthropologist, therefore, must be sure that his inferences are logically acceptable not only to his own mind but also to the minds of the participants in the culture he studies. All this requires a thorough knowledge of the overt aspects of a culture and a long familiarity with them. The author is painfully aware that he has not gone very deeply into the ethos of Ruanda. This is only an attempt at a synthesis of the results so far obtained in researches which are still proceeding.

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564 Three socio-racial castes are to be
563 distinguished among its peoples: pastoralist Batutsi[1] (about 10 per cent. of
162 the population), agriculturalist Bahutu (about 85 per cent.), and Batwa, hunters and potters (about 5 per cent.).

Man and the Material World

773 The world in which men are placed and which they know through their
776 senses was created *ex nihilo* by *Imana*. The Ruanda word *kurema* means to produce, to make. It is here rendered 'to create' because our informants say that there was nothing before *Imana* made the world. This belief concerning the origin of the material world is universal and clear. To any question on this point, the answer is ready.

772 The Banyarwanda assert that we do not see the whole of the material
[823] world which was created at that time. The world of our experience is flat; its limits are far away and made of fences like the ones we see around kraals. On these fences there is a big rock which is the sky we see. Beyond the rock there is another world (*ijuru*) similar to our own, with hills, trees, and rivers. This world may be said to be heavenly only in the sense that it is above the sky: it is not a paradise but rather a richer duplicate of our world. Under the soil on which we tread there is yet another world (*ikuxinu*) also conceived as similar to our own. There is nothing infernal about it. The material universe is thus a kind of three-storied construction. It is not impossible to go from one floor to another: some people and animals came from the world above to the intermediate world and, according to some legends, one man at least went to the lower world.

821 In our world the moon and the stars (which are kinds of glow-worms) stay high up in the sky. The sun rises in the morning and in the evening reaches the end of the world where a powerful man kills it and cuts it into pieces. Then he throws the main bone across the vault of heaven to the East where it grows up and the following morning the same process begins again.

773 In essentials our world was created as we see it now, but there have been
[823] some changes in the course of its history. Some hills were raised up by the kings of Ruanda; the formation of Kivu Lake is accounted for in different folk-tales. Cattle, which rank so high in the Ruanda scale of values, also made a special appearance on the intermediate world. The stories give more than one version of their origin but they agree on their arrival in a world already constituted and inhabited by men. According to some tales, creatures did not originally have the same bodily form as they have now. It is [825] said, for instance, that horns were given to animals after they had been created.

772 This, and a belief that the world is now slowly degenerating, getting old (people's stature is decreasing, cows give less milk), suggest that the Ruanda conception of the universe is not a wholly static one. The world does not remain the same, it is in process of evolution. However, when direct

[1] In this paper, following the common use, we have kept the prefixes of the Ruanda words, such as *mu* for the singular and *ba* for the plural.

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questions are asked, it appears that this conception of the life of the universe has not been the subject of speculation and is not of great importance to the Banyarwanda.

Without *Imana* the world would not continue to exist and his action is necessary to maintain life. *Imana's* action, however, is not manifested in particular interventions; it is conceived rather as an underlying force which sustains the whole universe but does not interfere in the development of the life of nature. Seeds are put into the ground and after some time plants come up, the banana-trees produce their yields, the cows breed. All this is the normal course of things and we may expect the recurrence of these events at the proper times. This universal order, indeed, is not independent of *Imana*. He made plants grow and animals multiply, but he does not have to act to give fertility in each case. The scholastic distinction between prime cause and secondary causes can very well be applied to Ruanda conceptions. *Imana* acts as the prime cause of the universe and therefore any event may be imputed to him. On the other hand, nature itself includes the secondary causes which account for the regular unfolding of its course.

But this natural order is not unalterable. *Imana* remains master of the rules he has established. There are numerous stories of miracles worked by *Imana* (a stick becomes a cow, teeth are granted to a girl who had none, &c.). Other beings besides *Imana* may act on nature: the spirits of the dead and even some men, the sorcerers. They may prevent somebody's beans from growing, they may have a man or a cow struck down by lightning. In particular, rain, so important in this country where rainfall is very irregular, has been regarded as under man's control. There were rain-makers (*bavubyi*) who had the dangerous responsibility of regulating rainfall.

Natural forces—rain, wind, hail, storms—are not considered as persons having desires and intentions that could be influenced by prayers or offerings. It seems that only thunder is personalized, and is regarded as a king (*mwami*). When a person has been struck by lightning, it is said that the Thunder-King has honoured his subjects with a visit and has taken one of them with him. Lightning receives the same salute as the king of Ruanda.

Banyarwanda implicitly distinguish between the regular course of nature and more or less unexpected events. Towards the former they assume a rational attitude. They do not look to the invisible world to account for the alternation of the phases of the moon, the growth of plants, the breeding of cattle. These phenomena are explicable on the level of secondary causes. Neither *Imana* nor the occult powers interfere in the normal course of material nature. It would be misleading to conceive of the Ruanda people as 'primitives' living in an irrational world where every phenomenon is an enchantment demanding explanation in terms of an intervention of the invisible world. They look at the world in its regular course in the same way as does a product of Western culture.

Of course, a Munyarwanda could not explain the interplay and the exact action of secondary causes as a Western scientist would do. But neither

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could the great majority of people in our culture. They believe that some specialists know exactly how natural phenomena work, and they have an idea of the type of explanation the specialists use. Banyarwanda have fundamentally the same attitude.

In relation to natural phenomena which do not appear with such regularity that they may be expected at about this or that time, the ideas of the Banyarwanda are quite different. Because of their unexpectedness, these events resemble the consequences of human intention. As a man suddenly becomes angry and hits somebody, so thunder strikes. If an occurrence is clearly an exception to natural laws, as Banyarwanda know them, they are confused. If I have taken ordinary care of my banana-grove and it does not produce so many or such good fruits as the trees of my neighbours on the same hill, there must be some reason to be sought outside the normal order of the world. Moreover, these unexpected events may often be dangerous and detrimental. Since any Munyarwanda has, as we shall see later, many powerful enemies in the invisible world, he is easily led to suspect them. Consequently, when confronted with happenings in the material world which do not fit into their conception of the normal order of things, the Banyarwanda explain these events as due to a special intervention of supernatural forces. *Imana* himself may be responsible, but when the event is regarded as harmful, ghosts or sorcerers bear the blame.

In this interpretation of unusual events, the Banyarwanda differ significantly from the people of the West. First, it should be emphasized that for us, events which seem to be exceptions to the laws of nature are much rarer. Those who scientifically know a certain field of spatio-temporal reality can show that events unforeseen by laymen, such as a storm, are in fact completely in accordance with the order of nature. When the event seems inexplicable to the specialist, the uninitiated person is generally unaware of the fact and indeed often displays a greater belief in physical science than do scientists themselves. A basic assumption of our culture is that science (of the physico-chemical type) can explain any material phenomenon. Thus any event in that sphere of reality will be interpreted in accordance with that belief. The event may, however, be of such a type that a 'scientific' explanation does not seem possible. For instance, the unpredictable event (a storm, a famine) may happen several times in the same place and no reason can be found for that repetition. The Western mind will then usually have recourse to the concept of chance, by which is meant, that the numerous conditions which must be realized in order to produce the event may happen accidentally to coincide more than once. There is no inevitability in the repetition of that constellation of conditions, it may just happen. The concept of chance, by which we avoid recourse to the supernatural in such cases, is not used by Banyarwanda. For them a phenomenon of the material world is either a part of the normal course of nature and is explicable in itself, or it is extraordinary and must be understood as a supernatural interference.

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Man and the Non-material World

Imana, the Creator

Imana, the creator, is a person. He is conceived as an intelligence, a will, an emotivity. He is extremely powerful: 'the plant protected by *Imana* is never hurt by wind', '*Imana* has very long arms', '*Imana* goes above any shield'. He is non-material. His action influences the whole world; but Ruanda is his home where he comes to spend the night. He is always invoked as 'God of Ruanda' (*Imana y'i Ruanda*). 776

Imana is essentially good: 'your enemy is digging a pitfall for you, *Imana* prepares your exit', '*Imana* gives, he does not sell'. This is why he takes care of men and why there is no cult in his honour. He is so good, I have been told, that he does not require any offering.

There is a special creative act of *Imana* at the beginning of each person's life. Impregnation in itself would not be sufficient to produce a new human being. This is why the young wife, at evening, leaves a few drops of water in a jar. *Imana*, as a potter, needs some water to shape the clay into a child in her womb. Then, after birth, *Imana* decides what life is to be for that individual: happy or unhappy. If, later on, a man is miserable, poverty-stricken, in bad health, it is said that he was created by *Ruremakwaci*. This way of speaking has led some observers to understand that besides *Imana*, there was another creator, perhaps subordinate, perhaps an evil spirit. As a matter of fact, *Ruremakwaci* is the name given to *Imana* when he does not create very successfully, when 'he is tired', or, for some inscrutable reason, decides that a certain destiny will be unhappy. This is consistent with the Ruanda linguistic habit of assigning different names to one cause according to its different effects. 776 842 776 777 [196]

Imana's influence is thought to be always beneficial for human beings. It happens very often that obstacles are placed in the way of his action by malevolent agencies of the invisible world, but from him only good things come. This is not completely consistent with the belief in an unfortunate predestination by *Imana*. It should be noted, first, that the theory of predestination has not a very deep impact on the attitude of Banyarwanda. A person who thinks himself unhappy, and might thus suspect that he has been predestined to a miserable life, does not seem to be submerged by a feeling of doom. Unless he is brought to despair by a situation from which there is no escape, he will go on living and trying to improve his condition. Secondly, this inconsistency will be better understood if we consider the attitude of Banyarwanda towards the king (the *Mwami*) in similar circumstances. The *Mwami*, the supreme authority is good, yet he may be harmful and cruel to some of his subjects. As his power is absolute, as he is magically identified with Ruanda itself, he may never be criticized. Thus the victims of some arbitrary royal decision, and their friends, go on saying that the king is good but that his favourite counsellor is very bad and is responsible for what they suffer. As might be expected, in Ruanda God is conceived [152] [43]

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according to the image of the *Mwami*, and thus when some misfortune occurs, the blame is put on another name of God or on the ghosts or sorcerers.

The beneficent action of *Imana* is general and remote. *Imana* is the source of all gifts, but he does not interfere very much in individual lives unless he is invoked. He is not the vigilant deity whom no single detail of the lives of his creatures can escape and who, when he acts, takes into account all the antecedents of the situation. There is a story of a man who borrowed beans from different people. When repayment of the loans was demanded, he was always able by his wits to avoid fulfilling his obligations. One creditor—Death—insists on being paid and pursues him. The debtor, when fleeing, calls upon *Imana* who saves him.

Imana—as is illustrated by this tale—is not the guardian of ethics and social order. He is not offended when somebody is robbed, but only if the offence is directed against himself, as when somebody disobeys a particular order of his or abuses his name. Then he punishes the offender by sending him misfortunes during his earthly life.

The Spirits of the Dead

The spirits of the dead (*bazimu*), with whom *Imana* has no closer relationships than he has with living people, constitute the second category of non-material beings. They continue the individuality of living persons and have the same names. It is usual to say: 'when he will be a *muzimu*. . . .' Though non-material, they are localized by their activity, in contrast to *Imana* who, having a much wider range of action, cannot be so precisely localized. They live in the lower world whose ruler is *Nyamuzinda* ('the one with whom one is forgotten'). Banyarwanda have not elaborated a very detailed picture of post-mortem existence. Although, according to some informants, the deceased kings of Ruanda constitute a kind of governing body in the underworld, there are no social distinctions. Life is neither pleasant nor unhappy. The *bazimu* do not drink, eat, or mate but their existence in other respects is similar to that in the world of the living. The *bazimu* sometimes come back to this world, returning to the places where they used to live. An ancestor and some other spirits may stay permanently in the hut where their descendants live or in the small huts made for them in the enclosure around the dwelling.

Whatever their temper when they were in this world, the *bazimu* are bad. Direct ancestors in both lines (although the system of descent is patrilineal) are believed to protect their living descendants, if they showed them proper filial behaviour when they were in this world, if they observe prohibitions and avoidances and if they do not forget to make offerings. But all other *bazimu* belonging to one's patrilineage (*mulyango*) are always harmful. The *bazimu* of other families are less detrimental except where there are feuds between the families. Ghosts are thus essentially malevolent towards the living. At best they are not actively injurious.

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In order not to irritate the dead various observances and interdicts must be complied with. The 'cult' of the *bazimu* is accordingly aimed at appeasing them. They are frequently offered a few drops of milk or hydromel. Sometimes they require the immolation of a goat or even a bull. A girl spends some time in the small hut dedicated to a *muzimu* in order that he may enjoy having a woman. Other practices are, however, more difficult to interpret. Water may be given to the *muzimu* while at the same time he is told very loudly that it is milk. The explanation given by most informants is that *bazimu* are rather stupid and that these mock offerings are not given to the direct ancestors, who are respected, but only to collaterals who, as *bazimu*, are hated. However, it is not very clear how one can at the same time fear the powerful *bazimu* and deceive them so grossly.

Among the *bazimu*, a small group, *Ryangombe* and his *imandwa*, is particularly powerful and important. *Ryangombe* is said to have been the chief of a small band of friends and clients. He was accidentally killed by a buffalo during a hunting party. In order not to leave *Ryangombe*, his friends threw themselves on the bull's horns. *Imana* gave them a special place, the Karisimbi, a former volcano, where they have a notably more agreeable life than the other *bazimu*. To have the privilege of joining them there, Banyarwanda have to be initiated into the sect (*kubandwa*). The members of the sect believe that non-initiates go after death into an active volcano, the Nyiragongo, where they suffer torments of fire. We have here an interesting instance of conflicting ideologies in a non-literate society: the common belief that all *bazimu* reside in the underworld and the belief of initiates, who are extremely numerous, in a mildly paradisal life for themselves and a hell for other people. During their earthly sojourn the initiates have other advantages, for the powerful *imandwa* do not harm them and indeed protect them from the injurious activities of other spirits.

The relations between *Ryangombe* and *Imana* seem to be conceived as those between a client (*mugaraqu*) and his patron (*shebuja*), persons who are linked by that typical Ruanda institution called *buhake*, in which a man in an inferior situation in the scale of wealth and social power asks another to grant him his protection and the possession of some cows; in return the client becomes his patron's man and owes him various services. *Ryangombe* is believed to be protected by *Imana* and to act more or less as his intermediary with regard to the initiates. But *Imana* is not present in *Ryangombe's* paradise. The cult of *Ryangombe* has importance as a force of social cohesion. Batutsi, Bahutu, and Batwa may all be initiated. This function is quite overtly stressed: *Ryangombe* has said himself that he should be called upon by everybody.

Diviners and Sorcerers

Two categories of men have special relations with the invisible world: diviners (*bapfumu*) and sorcerers (*barozi*). The former are interpreters of *Imana's* will, which they can discern in the figures made by knuckle-bones,

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in the viscera of chickens, rams, and bulls, or even by intuition without the aid of any instrument. Some of them use a medium, usually female, possessed by *Biheko* (one of the *imandwa*) or are possessed themselves. Thanks to them it is possible to oppose a certain defence against the *baxîmu*. They can identify the spirit who causes illness or sterility or is killing the cattle; they can tell what will appease him. Batutsi and Bahutu practise as *bapfumu*. It was formerly a very respectable calling; the techniques and methods of interpretation are often transmitted from father to son. Sorcerers (*barozi*), on the contrary, are criminals obliged to conceal their activities. If found they could be immediately killed. Some of them are believed to use poisons; for instance, a powder made from the lungs of a person who has died from tuberculosis is mixed in food. Others act by magical means: sending a *mazimu* to strangle somebody, acting through lightning or an animal, using spells. Besides a certain training in the formulae, they have to acquire a magical force handed on by another sorcerer.

Such, very sketchily drawn, is the non-material world of Banyarwanda. This world is dominated by *Imana*, essentially powerful and good. The century-old problem of evil in the world, particularly acute when there is a belief in the existence of a being who is omnipotent and infinitely good, has been solved by putting the responsibility for all evil and all suffering on agents other than *Imana*. These agents are mostly human, for *baxîmu* are indeed human personalities and sorcerers are men. *Imana* himself does not cause any evil but he allows the causes of evil to act. As God's beneficent action is remote, we may say that the invisible world is on the whole malevolent. Under the serene reign of the prime cause, ill-willed secondary causes have a large freedom of action which they use to torture men. Compared with the earthly world, the invisible one is rather disquieting, our informants told us. When daily life is painful, when personal security is threatened by external dangers, the thought of the invisible world present in this one has not the psychological function of relieving anxieties.

But to what extent is the invisible world a permanent presence in the lives of Ruanda people? Not to a very great extent, it seems. Their existence is not permanently dominated by the fear of *baxîmu* and sorcerers. As in the material world and its regular changes, Banyarwanda consider that there are 'natural' events in the human sphere, i.e. in the domain of human existence and the part of the world that man changes by his action (agriculture, cattle-rearing, hut-building, &c.). By 'natural' we mean that these events are understood without reference to the action of the supernatural world. Some antecedent events or acts are regarded as natural causes of others. To get a cold at the beginning of the dry or the rainy season is considered to be due to the change of weather. It is known that yaws can be got by contagion. Even death is very often accepted without seeking any magical explanation. It is expected, for instance, that people will die because of old age. If beans had been planted on poor soil, a bad crop would not mean that the field had been bewitched. Thus when recurrences have

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been observed or when 'causes' have been discovered in the sphere of human phenomena, events happening according to these recurrences or following these causes are considered as intelligible without any reference to the supernatural world. But when events cannot be explained by reference to natural antecedents or causes, or are surrounded by peculiar circumstances, the intervention of ghosts or sorcerers is suspected and a diviner is consulted. If somebody has tuberculosis (*igitundu*) and none of his forebears or the people with whom he lives has suffered from that disease, it is thought that sorcery is the cause. If somebody dies from an illness usually considered 'natural', but the death occurs a few days after a theft of which he is the supposed culprit, he is said to have been magically stricken at the request of the robbed person.

This attitude is in fact quite coherent. When the natural cause is known, the event is attributed to it; when it is not known, or appears extraordinary on account of the circumstances, the explanation is given in terms of beliefs concerning the non-material world. Why do Westerners not use a magical frame of reference on similar occasions? First, their wider knowledge of natural sequences of antecedents and consequents makes the residuum of naturally inexplicable facts more restricted. For instance, a sudden death appears to them quite understandable for purely medical reasons. To Banyarwanda, on the contrary, a sudden death is an event of which the physical causes are completely unknown. Second, even for residual facts not scientifically explained, there is in Western culture a faith that, given time and effort, a scientific explanation will be found. The Munyarwanda has no such belief in positive science. Third, for the disconcerting circumstances which may be coincidental with illness or death, the concept of chance, which does not appear frequently in Ruanda culture, is resorted to. However, Western believers in a provident God see in these exceptional circumstances, not an accidental constellation, but a sign of the meaning God intends to give to the illness or death.

A threat permanently dominating the mind of the Bahutu was that of being accused of sorcery. This danger was connected with the invisible world but was objective enough, for such an accusation could result in being killed and, of course, merely to refrain from anti-social magic did not ensure immunity from being called a *muvusi*.

The Nature and Situation of Man

Kanikamuntu (which may mean Root-of-Men) is the common ancestor of all mankind. Created by *Imana*, he had, among other children, Gatutsi, Gahutu, and Gatwa who, as their names indicate, are the ancestors of the three Ruanda social and 'racial' groups. Gatwa killed one of his brothers and for that reason was cursed by his father. Gahutu, who had been chosen by his father as heir and successor, had been commissioned by him to accomplish an important mission. As a result of overeating, Gahutu fell asleep and could not collect the information his father wanted. Gatutsi, on the

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other hand, got it by his sobriety and cleverness. Kazikamuntu then chose Gatutsi to be the chief of the brothers. There are numerous versions of this tale. Moreover, the stories concerning man's creation are often inextricably mixed with the legends about the arrival of the Batutsi in Ruanda. The same names appear sometimes in the creation, sometimes in the conquest stories. In general the latter are better known. The summary given above is thus only one of the various accounts of the origin of mankind.

According to a widely known folk-tale, Death, personalized as a sort of animal, was hunted by *Imana*. He told all men to stay at home in order that Death should not find a hiding-place. An old woman, however, went out to work in her banana-grove. Death, pursued by *Imana*, asked her protection. Moved by pity, she let the animal hide under her skirt. *Imana*, in order to punish her, decided then that death should stay with men. This story might perhaps suggest a belief that there was a time when men did not die. But we could not find other elements to corroborate that interpretation.

On the ontological character of man two points are certain. First, an adult human being is considered to be different from an animal by virtue of his faculty of speech (*kivuga*), his intelligence (*ubwenge*), and his will (*ugushaka*); but the difference, if any, between a small child and an animal is not quite clear. Second, no one of these attributes is equated with the surviving spirit (*muzimu*). There is something in the human being which, after his death, becomes *muzimu*, but there is no agreement as to what it is. According to a fairly common opinion, the *muzimu* is the metamorphosis of the *igicucu*, the shadow cast by the body in sunshine. But according to some informants, this shadow is only an image of the spiritual shadow which is the essence of the post-mortem spirit. In conformity with that opinion, the living man is said to be made of three components: the body (*mubili*) which, after death, becomes a corpse (*murambo*); life (*buzima*), which disappears; and the shadow (*igucucu*) from which the surviving spirit (*muzimu*) results.

The heart is believed to be the seat of intelligence and affectivity. It is conceived as a single organ although some ways of speaking suggest that it is double. For instance, it is frequently said: 'One heart told me this, one heart told me that.' This is another application of the habit of attributing opposed effects of the same cause to several causes, but this is only a verbal habit which does not deceive anybody.

These uncertainties regarding the nature of man indicate that Banyarwanda do not make any clear-cut distinction between the concepts of body and mind. Although they recognize parts in man, they prefer to consider the unit rather than its components.

Whatever the culture, human experience is made up of a sequence of events and activities, such as working, eating, sleeping, maturing, suffering, mating, getting old, and dying. What is the Ruanda attitude in face of these universals of human life? In many societies these happenings are considered not in their naked reality but in terms of the beliefs held as true in the particular culture. For instance, in a society with a Christian ideology, to

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suffer is not only to be hurt but also to expiate one's sins, to purify one's soul, and to identify oneself with Christ. For serious Christians, suffering cannot be stripped of its religious meaning without being completely distorted. Banyarwanda, on the contrary, seem to take a very 'secular' view of the human condition. Their belief in the supernatural world does not greatly influence their attitude to the unavoidable hardships and pleasures of life. All our informants agree that to die means above all to quit life. They believe that they will become *bazimu* but that leaves them rather indifferent. Even initiates do not show any enthusiasm for the idea of joining *Ryangombe* and his *imandwa* at their feasts. To abandon his children, his herds, his friends, is a sad thing for a Mututsi. But it is accepted, without dramatizing it, as one of those facts which belong to the normal order of things.

If quitting this life is so unfortunate, is human existence such a cheerful experience for Banyarwanda? Enjoyments and the pleasant things of life are very unevenly distributed in Ruanda. The superior caste, the Batutsi, form about 10 per cent. of the population. But, by various means, principally by the institutionalized exchange of cattle for services and dues, Batutsi have been able to gather a much higher proportion of consumers' goods. They do no manual work and have leisure to cultivate eloquence, poetry, refined manners, and the subtle art of being witty when talking and drinking hydromel with friends. Bahutu, perhaps 85 per cent. of the population, do not enjoy such gracious living. They have to produce for themselves and for Batutsi. On a very poor soil, with technologically primitive implements, it is necessary to work hard to secure the surplus production required by the Batutsi. Moreover, the great social influence of Batutsi has given opportunities for the arbitrary exercise of power, so that there are many insecurities in a Muhutu's life. But exploitation has been kept within limits set by the wisdom and the interests of the Batutsi, and a system of protection has assured a minimum of security to the Bahutu. As to the Batwa, they are so low in the social hierarchy, and are considered so irresponsible that they have had a greater independence of action. Formerly they lived on the margin of Ruanda society. They had a reputation for grossly enjoying any opportunities for eating, drinking, making music, and dancing. It should be added that Banyarwanda, according to our standards, have been rather defenceless against disease, that starvation was a real threat for the majority when the rains failed, that ritual observances and interdicts were numerous, and that when somebody happened to be involved in a charge of sorcery he had good reason for great fear. Thus it seems that, for an ordinary Munyarwanda, life is objectively hard, often dangerous but bearable. This partly explains the Ruanda outlook upon the totality of life. It might be described as a mild optimism. As many of our informants put it: 'Existence for Banyarwanda was not easy, it was even often very painful, but on the whole, life was rather a good thing.'

As everywhere, some individuals were at some time of their lives plunged into circumstances which offered apparently no way out. A Mututsi who

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had incurred the king's displeasure and was for that reason left without protectors, friends, or cattle was in a desperate situation; only with difficulty could he gain a bare subsistence. A Muhutu against whom an accusation of sorcery was repeated; an unmarried girl of a noble family whose pregnancy became publicly known; all these, if they failed to escape from their predicament by skill and rational behaviour (such as obtaining the king's mercy, denying the charge of sorcery and looking for the protection of a powerful man, using abortifacients or denying the pregnancy), would have recourse to the *bapfumu*, seeking to know what spirit or sorcerer was responsible for their misfortune and how to appease the malevolent being. If all the practices and offerings recommended by the diviner had no effect, then they called upon *Imana*, and if their prayers were unanswered, only drastic solutions remained, such as exile in a foreign country or suicide. But these tragic destinies were not numerous and they did not shake the belief of the majority in the moderate happiness of living.

There is a further reason for their generally cheerful acceptance of the conditions of their existence. Banyarwanda are not inclined to speculate about the inaccessible. Westerners are given to imagining how beautiful and good life might be if humanity and the universe were different from what they are. This trend of thinking is quite alien to Banyarwanda and, when it is suggested, appears futile to them. The usual, the normal (in the sense of what we are accustomed to, and what we have reason to expect) is often self-explanatory. When a particular event fits into the normal scheme of things, there are no questions to be asked. If everybody has to relinquish this existence and die, death is no scandal or absurdity. It is the way *Imana* has arranged things. There is no further problem.

Cultural Values

Human action is determined partly by cultural values, partly by the socially recognized means of attaining them. By cultural values we mean the final or intermediate aims that are considered the proper purposes of human activity in a particular society.

In a stratified society, such as that of Ruanda, each layer is likely to have its own set of values, although some of those originating in one group may extend to others. Let us begin with the Batutsi. When a Mututsi informant is asked what the people of his group wish for above all, the answer comes immediately: 'children and cattle.' A further question, 'why?', discloses that these are not ultimate values sought for themselves, but intermediate ones, means to reach more abstract ends. The latter are power (*amaboko*) and reputation (*ugukomera*).

Power is understood here in connexion with persons (power over somebody) rather than with things (power to do something). It is, to paraphrase Lasswell's definition, the ability that a person, engaged in a human relationship with another, has to oblige the latter to do or not to do something (on pain of suffering severe privation). Power is essentially the capacity to

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exert a significant pressure on somebody. In Ruanda, to be powerful is to be able to exact from others tribute in labour or in kind, or support for one's claims to some advantage to be obtained from the king. In the latter case pressure may remain undefined and indirect: for instance, a threat to withold backing which may later be necessary to the person who is now asked to support a request. We desire to have cattle, say our informants, because by giving one or two beasts to a Muhutu, he becomes our client (*mugaragu*) and then has to do, to a large extent, what we ask of him. We also like to have cattle in order to get as vassal another Mututsi who lacks them. The services expected from a vassal are not manual, but he will increase the influence of his lord by his family connexions and will be useful through his diplomatic shrewdness in dealing with his lord's intrigues. Finally, we desire to become ourselves the vassals of great chiefs, or even of the king, because we are then under the protection of somebody very important, we get more cows and that allows us to have more clients.

In order to become powerful it is important, almost indispensable, to have many children. Girls, by their marriages, extend one's family connexions and bring their fathers a few cows as bridewealth. Boys at an early age begin their military training which gives them a complete education in the skills, knowledge, and virtues pertaining to their noble condition. This training is given them as *intore* (chosen ones) at the royal court or at the court of an important chief. For a father to have a son at court would reinforce his influence: through his son he knows what is going on, and the king or the chief is constantly reminded of the father by the son's presence —an important security for the father. The boy could also increase the influence of his family by becoming the client of a powerful Mututsi, and thereby getting protection and cows for himself and his parents' family (*mulyango*). Finally, the marriages of his sons could create new links between the father and the families of his daughters-in-law.

In complex societies like our own the roads to power are many. In Ruanda it does not appear that power could be readily attained except through the possession of children and cows. As we shall see, warlike valour could confer very high prestige, but not necessarily power. Great warriors were often granted herds of cattle by the king as rewards for their prowess, and could then gain power by their cattle, but not directly.

If we press our analysis farther, we may say that from the point of view of power, the significance of children is to provide cattle or connexions. On the other hand, cattle give direct power (over the Bahutu clients) or ensure connexions. In relation to Bahutu labourers, cattle have many of the social functions of money in our culture. They enable the man who owns them to exert pressure on those who have few or none of their own and who try to acquire them in exchange for services. In order to facilitate comparison with other ways of life, we may use the term wealth (as a medium of exchange) instead of cattle. As for connexions, what is meant here is that type of relationship in which one party may require something from the

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other under the threat of some sanction. In Ruanda, of course, it would be considered very improper to give orders or to utter a threat, but beneath the polite phrasing, the true meaning of the relationship is clear. Consequently we may say that in Ruanda, the only means to power are wealth and relationships in which sanctions are implied.

The other ultimate value of Banyarwanda, reputation, is also closely connected with children and cattle. First, because powerful men are greatly respected and everybody knows the significance of daughters, sons, and cattle as means to power. Second, because cattle have also a high prestige-value in themselves. Indeed to entertain friends properly and to maintain the superior style of living of the nobles, one must have plenty of milk. Milk is the beverage of the high caste. They also drink hydromel and banana-beer, but milk is more characteristic of the Mututsi way of life. It was considered a complete food, and true Batutsi were said to live on milk alone. As each cow did not produce much milk, it was necessary to have an important herd to provide for the needs of a well-to-do Mututsi family. Moreover, cattle had an important aesthetic value in Ruanda. To be expert in cattle-breeding was required of the nobility. A whole category of poetry was devoted to the praises of famous cows, individually identified. Very beautiful cows (called *inyambo*) were regarded as belonging to the king even if they had been produced in somebody else's herd. In many festivities cattle were presented to the king or to great chiefs. All this indicates that cattle were objects of keen interest and aroused feelings of pride similar to those associated in some Western sub-cultures with the ownership of hunters or luxury cars. Cattle were the privileged possession of the superior caste, just as in Europe, in the Middle Ages, a noble had to have some landed property. Without losing status, he could not exchange his real estate for gold or goods even if they were worth much more. Such being the feelings and emotions attached to the possession of cattle in Ruanda, their high prestige-value is readily understandable.

The antiquity of a family is highly valued in Ruanda. Almost any Mututsi is able to give the names of his ancestors for six or eight generations. A family has property which is handed on from one generation to another, common ancestors to be honoured, a set of traditions and legends. It is a living reality in which one is proud to participate. Against that background one may appreciate how children, and particularly sons, give prestige to the parents. To have many children ensures that family traditions will be maintained, that the importance of the family will increase, that its property will be kept and even enlarged, that the ancestors will be honoured. This not only makes the parents happy, but is recognized by other people and their esteem for the father is enhanced.

Besides recognition of their power, admiration for their cattle, and the respect paid to them on account of their having many children, the Batutsi seek more specific reputations. They like to be recognized as courageous. They came to Ruanda by conquest and, till the European occupation, their

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main social function as a caste was to make war, more often offensive than defensive. Consequently military courage (*ubutwari*) was highly praised. There are numerous and interminable poems made by official bards, telling stories of battle and commemorating military prowess. The young Batutsi, during their training, were taught to compose such poems and even to invent imaginary doughty deeds. Special signs, or badges of honour, were granted to those who had killed seven or fourteen enemies during an expedition; there was a special ceremony to honour warriors who had killed twenty-one persons in a campaign. Some informants were still able to give the names of warriors who had received these marks of honour.

It is worthwhile to note, however, that even in a society so focused on military values, great warriors could gain an extreme popularity but not, at least directly, social power. Martial valour as such was not even considered a special qualification for becoming commander of the army (*mutware w' ingabo*). During battles, indeed, the chief of the army had to stay motionless in his headquarters. He was magically identified with his army: he could not move backwards without endangering the advance of the army. This type of command did not require much courage. An army commander was, on the other hand, very high in the power scale. Members of the army had to give him cattle on certain occasions (w[illegible] he was taking up his duties, when he was reviewing the herds of the army members); the king granted him cattle in some circumstances, for instance, after a battle had been won, or he entrusted to the army the care of some herds. By these means the army chief had control of many beasts: he could then increase his clientship, and thus his social power, by gifts of cattle.

A Mututsi also greatly desires to be regarded as having *ubugabo*. This means the quality of being a man (*mugabo*); it includes trustworthiness in keeping promises, generosity in treating one's friends well, liberality towards the poor, moral courage in accepting one's responsibilities. In a society where relations of inferiority and superiority are predominantly personal, in the sense that authority is rarely abstract (a law, a principle) but generally identified with a person (chief, king, lord, &c.), emphasis is laid on fidelity in any personal relationship.

Another quality that the Batutsi are extremely proud to have is *itonde*. This may be translated as 'self-mastery'. To lose one's temper, to manifest violent emotion by crying is really shameful. Anger, in particular, should not be violently expressed. The demeanour of a Mututsi should always be dignified, polite, amiable, if a little supercilious. Batutsi manners have often been called hypocritical. This would be true if such behaviour were displayed in an extrovert culture where it is considered unethical not to express to a person exactly what one thinks about him. But in Ruanda it is taken for granted that only vulgar persons reveal all their attitudes and emotions. This is understandable in a strongly hierarchical society, where the authority of a superior is not restricted to certain specific domains of the life of his inferior, and where to express any disagreement with the superior

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is thought inappropriate. This is the point of view alike of the inferior (and everyone in Ruanda, except the king, has a superior) and of the superior (and any Mututsi is the superior of a certain number of people). Bahutu are not, and are not expected to be, very self-controlled; they are correspondingly impressed by the external dignity of the Batutsi. An aristocratic caste usually emphasizes those differences which constantly remind others how far removed they are from the noble set.[1]

When inquiries were made as to the kind of reputation the Batutsi specially wanted to avoid, the answers given did not generally indicate qualities opposed to those thought desirable, but referred to reputations in which an external danger is involved. Above all, a Mututsi fears to be considered an enemy of the king. This is partly because he feels a genuine respect for the king, but mainly because to be reputed the king's enemy was formerly extremely dangerous. It could mean dispossesaion of all property, severance of all social relations, exile, or death. A Mututsi also fears to be considered a traitor to his chief. This is less dangerous but it involves sanctions: if a Mututsi has been disloyal to his lord (*shebuja*), the latter may take back from him all he gave him previously and eventually all his cattle.

All this relates to the good or bad reputations people desire or fear while living, but the Batutsi are equally concerned with their posthumous fame. To be remembered as a great warrior or a powerful cattle-owner was the normal ambition of any Mututsi. Some deaths were particularly glorious: for example, to be killed in battle or to lose one's life rather than surrender one's cattle, because this is to be deprived of the only means of living in a manner appropriate to one's rank.

The longing for fame after death seems to be deeper and commoner than in our culture. It is not unlike the Ciceronian concept of *gloria*. It is a desire to go on living in men's memory quite apart from a belief in a supernatural immortality and, like *gloria*, has nothing to do with mythological conceptions of the beyond. Banyarwanda do not think that the spirits of the dead will take pleasure from the great reputations they have on earth, or so at least our informants told us. 'If *bazimu* know perhaps the fame that the people from whom they come enjoy among the living, it is definitely not for that reason that we hope to be famous after our death.' It is possible, however, that it may be connected with the belief that the living will make more offerings to the *muzimu* of somebody who is widely remembered, though we did not find evidence of any belief that the spirits would suffer a kind of second death, and disappear completely if and when they were forgotten by the living.

To sum up, the ultimate values for the aristocracy are power and reputation. Children[2] and cattle are their main intermediate values in the sense

[1] There are, of course, other virtues that a Mututsi likes to be thought to possess, but the three we have mentioned seem the most important according to our informants.

[2] The preceding account might give the impression that for the Batutsi, children are only means to power and fame. This view would overlook the fact that people also enjoy

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that they are the almost indispensable means for achieving these ends. The originality of Ruanda culture does not lie in its high valuation of power and fame. These are recognized ends in many cultures. What is distinctive is the paucity and the indispensability of the means provided in that society for effecting these purposes.

An ordinary Muhutu could never hope to achieve a position of power over other men comparable to that which a Mututsi could attain without difficulty. A well-to-do Muhutu could acquire a few servants either by ensuring the subsistence of other Bahutu poorer than himself or, like a Mututsi, by the gift of cattle. But this was not common. Ambition for power is proper to people who do not have to worry about fundamental human needs such as food, shelter, &c. The ultimate value for Bahutu is security, for this means protection from the things our informants say they fear above all: accusations of witchcraft, starvation, and the arbitrary actions of the powerful. There are no direct methods of protecting oneself against the first of these threats. All that can be done preventively is to be a good neighbour, not to be envied by anybody, not to have enemies. . . . But there are ways of reducing the other two dangers and these are the intermediate values which the Bahutu earnestly seek: work, children, and patronage.

Bahutu till the soil from which they have to get subsistence, the tribute demanded by the chief, and perhaps a surplus. This surplus is extremely important because it will enable them to acquire some goats, sheep, even a cow, to have the time to work for their lord, to store enough food to get a few servants who will then increase production. Surpluses may be obtained only by work. That is why, among Bahutu, the man or the woman who works hard and competently is highly considered. Work enables Bahutu to achieve some security against starvation and even to attain moderate wealth.

There is a Ruanda proverb that the dog is not feared because of his fangs but because of his master. This is the main reason why a Muhutu wants to have a patron. A peasant rich enough to own a couple of cows needs the protection of somebody more powerful than himself in order to avoid the arbitrary exactions of some member of the dominant class. Patronage was institutionalized by the *buhake* agreement mentioned above. Like the lord in medieval Europe, the patron was bound to protect his client in most of the dangerous situations of life. A second reason for seeking a patron lay in the material and moral advantages accruing from the possession of cattle.

If we wish to state Bahutu values in more abstract terms, we may say that they seek security through the production of agricultural goods and the protection of a powerful patron.

Although he is not indifferent to his reputation, the Muhutu does not seem to stress its importance as much as does the Mututsi. The reputation he desires reflects the values of his caste. He likes to be considered as

their children just because they are their children. This, of course, exists in Ruanda as in many other cultures.

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181 584 554 *mugabo* (a rich man) and a *mukungu*—a very rich man possessing a few cows, many fields, goats, and bee-hives. He enjoys the recognition of his fidelity to his master and his qualities as a labourer.

The Batwa never had the stability of peasants. They were hunters, potters, dancers, buffoons, and were regarded by their neighbours as being on the margin of society. They did not possess anything that others could envy. Consequently security from exactions was not such an important value for them. As people who lived a hazardous and unsettled existence, they greatly appreciated momentary and immediate satisfactions, and among these, food, especially during periods of scarcity, was the object of their activity. Their principal means of securing food varied according to their particular occupations. Hunters depended on their ability and their courage, of which they were very proud. Dancers, musicians, and buffoons relied on their talents and on the favour of their masters, their loyalty to whom was widely recognized. Indeed it is said that one could rely upon a Mutwa much more than on anybody else.

The social and economic situation of the Batwa explains and to some extent determines the value they attach to gratifying the basic need for food. Ability in their specialized occupations and a blind faithfulness to their masters were the best means to achieve that satisfaction, but skills and loyalty were also valued for themselves.

Rules of Human Action

517 183 These values, ultimate and intermediate, were eagerly sought by Banyarwanda but, as in any society, some means for realizing them were prohibited under certain circumstances. Stealing is rarely, if ever, culturally accepted as an ordinary practice for getting rich. Socially defined values are to be reached by socially approved means. We do not suggest that, in a particular society, the rules of action appear as merely social imperatives, or that the only basis for these rules is social. We would point out that some rules of action, whatever their origin and their philosophical foundation, are part of the collective heritage in any society. In Ruanda, as elsewhere, there are such rules of action. Murdering somebody who is not an enemy of one's family is prohibited. Women are forbidden to commit adultery and, among Batutsi and Bahutu, unmarried girls may not have sexual intercourse. When an order is issued by somebody in authority it has to be obeyed.

517 626 Does submission to the rules appear only as the rational behaviour of one who wishes to avoid an external punishment or is it moral conduct? Does a prospective offender refrain from wrong-doing simply in order to avoid very probable and unpleasant consequences, or is it his conscience which tells him that he should not follow his desire?

Of course this is not an either-or problem, but the question of degree or relative stress is important. Even in cultures which lay most stress on the moral motivation to action, external social sanctions are useful deterrents from prohibited behaviour. In Ruanda these external sanctions exist. Those

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who steal cattle, or set fire to huts, or commit adultery are punished by the political or family authorities. Social sanctions are not only physically enforced penalties, such as corporal punishment and compensations, but also the unorganized reactions of the people who know the delinquent: kin, neighbours, clients, and lord. For the Batutsi, for whom reputation stands high in the scale of values, this is extremely important. According to our informants, the fear of being considered a man without loyalty or without dignity, the dread of being despised by one's family, prevent many breaches of rules. To use Kluckhohn's terminology, we may say that Ruanda's is a shame-culture. But it is also a guilt-culture. When a Munyarwanda has transgressed some rule so secretly that there is not the slightest chance of his being found out and incurring punishment and shame, he nevertheless feels guilty and knows, our informants told us, that his action is bad. When a child has disobeyed his father without the latter's knowledge, he thinks not only of the unpleasant consequences that the discovery of his misbehaviour might produce but also (and some informants say 'mainly') of the wickedness of the act itself. The Ruanda word for conscience, *kamera*, means something that is internally felt. It is situated in the heart.

That the Banyarwanda have a 'conscience' will not be rated as a great discovery by some. But since some recent studies, such as Kluckhohn's on the Navaho, have stressed the fact that, in some cultures, submission to rules seems to be realized almost entirely through a rational concern to avoid punishment or shame, it does not seem superfluous to consider how far observance of rules is, or is not, linked to ethical principles and feelings of guilt.

Let us now attempt to indicate more precisely how moral wrong is conceived in the Ruanda culture. As has been already mentioned, *Imana* is not the guardian of the moral order. Sometimes he seems to be regarded as its author in the sense that he might have decided that men should not steal; but it is clear that when a man steals another man's cows, *Imana* is not personally offended. Those who are offended are those who have been wronged by the action, or those who had issued an order which has been disobeyed. When *Imana* has not been directly injured (as by blasphemies), or when the injury done to another has not been specifically forbidden by him, he is not thought to be offended. The victim could, however, ask *Imana* to punish the wrongdoer and if he then became ill, it would be said that *Imana* had punished him.

The other agencies of the supernatural world have even slighter relations with ethical values. The *bazimu* are naturally malevolent and punish only those actions which they take to be directed against themselves. A way to honour the spirit of somebody who had been a thief during his life was to simulate a robbery. *Ryangombe* and his fellows were not models of morality during their earthly existence and they did not care about the ethics of their followers. Nor was there any punishment after death. For those who believe that there are two kinds of life after death—happy or unhappy—the

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qualification for the happy one is not to live a blameless life on earth, but to undergo initiation into the *Ryangombe* cult.

Thus the ethics of the Banyarwanda are not integrated on a religious basis such as the will of God. What is the principle of integration, or rather, we should first ask, are their ethical conceptions integrated? On the surface they consist, like any moral code, of a multiplicity of prohibitions, orders, and exhortations. Have they achieved a synthesis of these separate elements by reducing the multiplicity to one or a few principles? Or, what amounts to the same thing, could they give a definition of good and evil?

In Ruanda a great number of particular rules are subsumed under general principles such as: do not do what is harmful to people of your group or of your country; do what people related to you would like; submit to your superiors. Principles such as these are already on a higher level of abstraction than the particular rules. When informants are asked to account for a given rule or principle they give as the final justification: 'It has always been done that way in Ruanda.' We may perhaps express the Ruanda definition of good and evil in these terms: That is good (or evil) which tradition has defined as good (or evil).

Tradition is indeed a powerful force in cultures which, as in Ruanda, have been isolated for centuries from world currents. Each generation is more conscious of the importance of what it has received from the preceding one than is possible when much of what constitutes its way of life comes not from its ancestors but from some other social tradition. Moreover, their relations with their neighbours whom they frequently subjugated have persuaded Banyarwanda of the excellence of the ways of life transmitted by their forefathers. In such a situation the traditional character of a rule appears to be sufficient justification. If the ancestors, who were so wise, behaved in that way it would be preposterous to question it.

But it would be misleading to picture the Banyarwanda as following blindly the moral rules framed in a remote past without having any idea of their purpose. Some old men have a clear understanding of the social significance of certain rules. They explained, for example, that the duality of the rules concerning adultery committed by the husband or by the wife was accounted for by the importance of the wife's function in procreation. She has thus a greater responsibility than the husband for maintaining the integrity of the family.

Does this kind of thinking extend so far as independence of tradition? Some informants told us that, apart from the authority of custom, some actions were thought of as dishonourable in themselves. But these informants were Christians and, apparently, very much influenced by their religion. Moreover, they could not quote a clear case of conflict between tradition and ethics.

No moral code can achieve an absolute character in all its precepts. Prohibitions and commands frequently relate only to certain categories of persons and situations. Even the Christian Western ethic, which realizes to

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a very considerable extent universality and absoluteness, qualifies some of its commands. The degree of absoluteness and universality of the Ruanda rules of conduct is much lower. We might say that most of its precepts are qualified in relation to persons and circumstances. To steal cattle was forbidden, but a Mututsi could take the cattle of a Muhutu who had no lord. For a Muhutu to rob a foreigner was not forbidden. A wife might not commit adultery, but she was allowed to have sexual relations with people when ordered by her husband to do so and, even without her husband's permission, a woman could have intercourse with her husband's brothers and parallel cousins. Killing a man was prohibited, but not if he was an enemy of Ruanda or of the family, and if the feud had not been barred by the king. Banyarwanda certainly had no idea of rules of behaviour applicable to all men in virtue of their common humanity. This is perfectly consistent with the Ruanda conception of mankind and the very significant inequalities which Banyarwanda observe between themselves and neighbouring peoples and, among themselves, between the different castes.

To conclude, the rules of human action which prohibit or enjoin the use of certain means in order to achieve the culturally recognized values of Ruanda are sanctioned, not only by organized and unorganized social reactions but also by individual conscience or guilt feelings. The foundation of this moral code is not religious or supernatural but traditional; its content is a multiplicity of rules synthesized under a few moral principles. Particular precepts do not have a universal application but are relative to persons and groups.

Human Relations

Two principles dominate the field of human relations in Ruanda: inequality of men and indefinite reciprocity.

For the Banyarwanda all men have indeed a common nature; they are ultimately the descendants of the same ancestor. But this notion does not seem to be very significant, for Banyarwanda are much more impressed by the differences displayed by the various castes. The characteristics of these castes are stereotyped and repeated in many folk-tales. Batutsi are intelligent (in the sense of astute in political intrigues), apt to command, refined, courageous, and cruel. Bahutu are hard-working, not very clever, extrovert, irascible, unmannerly, obedient, physically strong. Batwa are gluttonous, loyal to their Batutsi masters, lazy, courageous when hunting, lacking in restraint. These characteristics, with differences in stress and shading, are generally recognized by all Banyarwanda. As they reflect the Mututsi point of view, it appears that the superior caste has been able to make other people see themselves in important respects as Batutsi see them. Moreover, those qualities are considered to be innate, not acquired. A Mututsi is born clever and a Muhutu impulsive. Some tales, more widely known than those concerning the creation of man, relate how the first Batutsi came to Ruanda

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from the heavenly world. According to some versions of this tale, they came with their servant, Mutwa, who mated with a forest ape. From that union all Batwa are descended. Such tales clearly reveal the fundamental differences which the Banyarwanda see among their castes.

When such a picture of 'natural' differences, so significant from the point of view of power, is accepted, the inevitable consequence is that some men are born chiefs and others labourers. Inferiority and superiority are due not to personal qualities but to membership of certain groups. By belonging to different castes, people have fundamentally unequal rights. If an ordinary Mututsi kills a Muhutu, one kinsman of the murderer could eventually be killed in retaliation if the king authorized it. If the murderer was a Muhutu and the victim a Mututsi, two lives were taken.

The principle of the fundamental inequality between social groups thus established in Ruanda has spread from the original inter-caste relations to intra-caste situations. A man superior to another member of his class because of his functions or his wealth, or even his ability, tends to assume towards his inferior an attitude similar to that of a Mututsi *vis-à-vis* a Muhutu. Of course the conception of inequality between superiors and inferiors of the same class is not so rigid as that between the castes, but it permeates all hierarchical situations in Ruanda.

The theme of inequality was embodied in the indigenous political organization, so that political relations clearly express the attitudes socially expected from superiors and inferiors. They are quite understandable if one bears in mind that they originate from an inter-caste situation. Authority as such is all-embracing. According to Western conceptions, any authority is defined not only as regards the people who are subject to it, but also in respect of the matters falling within its competence. A man who gives orders to another because they are on different levels in a hierarchical scale may be considered his equal in other relations. In Ruanda, there is almost no sphere of life in which an inferior is free from the interference of his superior. Because Batutsi are considered fundamentally superior to the Bahutu, there is no field in which they can feel equal. This attitude has been transferred to any hierarchical situation. The complementary attitude of dependence is, of course, expected from the inferior. Inferiority is the relative situation of a person who has to submit to another in a clearly defined field; dependence is inferiority in the totality of life. The dependent person has to submit to his master in any question. There is no domain where he is free even to express a contrary opinion. As the dependent has always to acquiesce even when orders are quite impracticable, he has to conceal his opinions and find excuses for not doing what has been ordered. Double-dealing, politeness, or a utilitarian conception of language, are the only defences of the dependent. Some time ago, a Ruanda deliberative assembly of people of standing was asked its opinion on a contemplated reform. When the most important person had given his views, everybody voted for his proposition. But after the assembly, many expressed disagreement. At the

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time of the vote, they had considered it improper and impolite not to agree with their superior.

On the other hand, no superior enjoys a purely arbitrary power. There are norms which are informally enforced by social pressure; and this is particularly important for people so concerned about their reputations. Since, moreover, there are several chiefs of equal rank belonging to different political structures, it is not difficult for the subject of one superior to secure support in opposing him from another. Finally, there is the possibility of appeal to a higher authority empowered to control subordinate chiefs. All this limits, in fact, the authority of chiefs, but nevertheless the authority of a superior cannot be questioned by his subjects. They may escape, intrigue, or look for another protector, but they cannot offer direct opposition. The Western conception of contract, derived from Roman law, with well-defined obligations on both parties who are equal before and during the contract, is accordingly not understood or acted upon even by Banyarwanda who have long been familiar with our culture.

Any superior is a protector, and his protection is of the same character as his authority: all-embracing and limited only by his own convenience. In any difficulty, the inferior may ask the help of his master, and, if help is refused, it will not be on the grounds that the superior is not concerned with that aspect of the life of the subordinate. On the other hand, the superior himself will be the only judge of the limits of his intervention, for the dependent has no right to require anything from his superior.

Everywhere men in authority enjoy advantages denied to those whom they command, but it is often felt that justification is needed for these privileges. In Ruanda such rationalizations do not seem to be required. It is taken for granted by everybody, the subjects included, that superiors as such should derive profits from their position. The very high standard of living of Europeans is accepted without any criticism by 'traditional' Banyarwanda not yet imbued with egalitarian principles.

The conception of authority as all-embracing, unlimited, protective, profitable, and of inferiority as dependent, devoid of rights, fundamentally weak, and generally exploited, is exactly suited to a structure of castes composed of human beings who are thought to be fundamentally different and unequal. On these inter-caste relations all hierarchical relations have been modelled. This means that the conceptions and attitudes which have just been sketched pervade most human relations in Ruanda. Indeed, very many human interactions involve persons who, in Ruanda, are placed on a hierarchical scale: man and woman, husband and wife, mother and child, father and son, old and young, craftsman and apprentice, &c., and when there is also a superiority-inferiority situation, even though confined to one aspect of the relation, the whole of that relation is impregnated with inequality.

Another basic principle governing the field of human relations in Ruanda is that of indefinite reciprocity. Whenever somebody receives a service,

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whenever goods are given to someone, a return is expected. This return is not the exact counterpart of what has been provided and is not due immediately or at a precisely determined time. By the granting of a favour, an almost permanent relationship is established between two persons, extending eventually to their immediate relatives. Undoubtedly some obligations are more formalized, such as those resulting from some kinds of exchange (*kuguza*), loan (*gutiza*), &c. But many relations which, in Western culture, would result in strictly defined obligations, do not have the same consequence in Ruanda. The man who receives a service or a gift is not expected to return its equivalent immediately. Such behaviour would even be frowned upon. He should wait till he is asked to return other services or goods. This is indeed the intention of the man who grants the favour: to put somebody under an undefined obligation.

There are several reasons for these relations of reciprocity. First, in an economy in which there is no standard value in relation to which everything may be assessed, it is not easy to determine a precise equivalent for goods. Second, where there is no standard medium of exchange, such as money, which can be accumulated without deteriorating, it is usually difficult to have the required equivalent to hand. Third, in a material culture in which the technological development does not allow of specialization, one has to rely on many people. It is thus very useful to have permanent debtors. Finally, and this is very important, the principle of reciprocity is much more consistent with other parts of the Ruanda culture than are alternative methods. In that culture people are not regarded as independent and equal. Consequently any relation will be so interpreted as to magnify the elements of dependence and inequality implicit in it. Moreover, to have power over somebody is an ultimate value for the Batutsi. They will thus prefer to keep a debtor under the vague obligation to do something, some day, rather than receive immediate compensation.

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